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Saving a National Treasure

October 23, 2009

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The Honorable John C. Watkins
Housing & Environmental Standards Work Group
Virginia Housing Commission
910 Capitol Street, Second Floor
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Senator Watkins:

I will, unfortunately, be unable to attend today's meeting of the Virginia Housing Commission's Housing & Environmental Standards Work Group (Work Group) due to an unanticipated conflict. With your allowance, I request that this letter be provided to members of the Work Group and read into the record. Thank you for considering the concerns of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) in your review of the final Virginia Stormwater Management Regulations (regulations).

CBF participated extensively in the three-year process undertaken by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to update their stormwater management program. DCR employed an exhaustive and inclusive process throughout preparation of the final regulations. During culmination of this process, CBF recommended that DCR forego additional proposed changes, ultimately accepted by the Soil and Water Conservation Board, which could diminish the water quality improvements delivered by this program. However, overall, CBF finds that the final regulations offer an improvement to the existing program and a step forward in meeting restoration goals for the Chesapeake Bay.

As a result of input from the development community, DCR modified the water quality and water quantity technical requirements to facilitate development on small parcels, redevelopment sites, and that occurring within our Urban Development Areas. The program will also offer five different offsite options; that is, the flexibility to meet requirements at lower costs through the private market, a state "buy down" program, or any of three local program options. Additionally, compliance is not required until October 2011 at the earliest and new grandfathering provisions will allow certain development projects until 2019 to comply.

CBF urges the Commonwealth to finish the work begun three years ago and chart its own path to create a stormwater program that meets new EPA mandates and accommodates both future development and healthy water.

The Honorable John C. Watkins
Housing & Environmental Standards Work Group
Virginia Housing Commission
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Thank you for this opportunity to share CBF's position on the final regulations. I am available at 804/780-1392 or at ajennings@cbf.org if you or members of your Work Group wish to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann F. Jennings". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Ann F. Jennings
Virginia Executive Director

cc: Virginia Housing Commission, Housing & Environmental Standards Work Group
May Fox, LeClair Ryan